

## **DAN HUGHES SEMINAR NOTES (Sydney - March 2006)**

### **2 months to 12 months:**

- Most social time of life
- Want social interaction more than food at this age
- Brain development occurs through key experiences
- Part of the brain is active when doing this dance of 'attunement' with the parent eg eye contact, reciprocal speech etc.
- 7 months is the age when it kicks in – separation anxiety and stranger stress.
- Meaning of self comes from parent during the 'reciprocal' dance'.

### **Without 'attunement in their early stages':**

- Limits empathy, limits coherent sense of self and limits communication
- Doesn't develop emotional states
- Can identify some emotional states like anger but not other states.
- Can't read parents motives very well
- Superficial concept – get what they want.
- Transitions are difficult even from chores to fun.

Attachment security is a protective factor against Mental Illness ie less likely to have mental illness if securely attached.

### **Children not securely attached children cannot:**

- Regulate affect
- Reflect and integrate
- Be aware of self
- Identify
- Express

### **Prevalence in society:**

- 66% have a secure attachment
- 25% don't have secure attachment – artificially independent and emotional independent.
- 5 to 8 % of population have Attachment Disorganised – risk of psychopathology (mental health issues).
- 65 to 82 % of foster kids had attachment disorganisation (due to abuse and neglect).

### **Characteristics of Attachment difficulties:**

- Want with a passion to CONTROL everything in the world. 'If I can't rely on another human being I will have to do it myself'. 'No thing is in control of me'.
- If we give them the control they will make decisions that are not in their best interest.

### Types of attachment difficulties:

- Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) – orphanage kids who go to anyone.
- Developmental Trauma Disorder re Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- Attachment Disorganisation – more likely to be abused and neglected kids.

### Attachment Disorganisation – what are they missing?

- Key dance between Mum and baby – mother responds the split second after the baby's response then the baby responds. What the parent thinks of the baby the baby integrates this into self.
- When this 'dance' was interrupted in an experiment the baby started self-focus.
- Neglected kids have a weak ability to communicate what they feel because of out of synchronisation with the 'dance'.

### How do these children feel?

#### SHAME:

- Biggest problem (not trauma).
- Want to hide from other people.
- "I am worthless, disgusting, garbage" (learnt this through lack of responses early in life – 'your experience is not important to me').
- Shame is not guilt
- Guilt – is about your behaviour and about other people.
- Shame – is about yourself. Biggest correlation with psychopathology.
- Deny things – lying behaviours is a compulsion to hide the shame. Make excuses, minimising behaviour.
- If get cornered – Rage.
- High correlation between shame and rage.
- Toddlers move into 'shame'. Can't differentiate that it is about their behaviour not them – then empathy and guilt kicks in when they learn. These kids don't have the opportunity to learn this.
- **Greatest impediment to development of conscience/guilt is shame.**
- Turning point can be when they can say 'I am a rotten kid'. 'I hate it when you are nice to me' – awareness of their shame.
- When parent says 'You are not a bad kid' – child thinks 'my parent is clueless' or 'My parent is lying'.
- Best response is 'When you make a mistake you think you are a bad kid'. (Empathy)

### What do these children need?

- Children need 'inner' stuff not just behaviour management.
- Need to help a child develop the connection between traumas and losses and current functioning.

- Rather than talking about how the child feels need to talk about how the we feel
  - “I feel this for you’.
  - ‘I think you are telling me you haven’t had a mother all your life and that this makes you think.....’.
  - ‘I think you are telling me you think you are a bad kid’.
- Need to play an active role in helping the child organise their experiences – we can’t wait for them to do it – they may never as they will avoid new experiences.
- Cannot wait until child is ready to bring it up – if don’t bring it up it is so shameful or saying the child is too fragile.
- Feel what you would feel in their circumstances and communicate it with the child.
- Good parents always ‘organise’ their kids.
- ‘Positive delusion’ – need to feel they are the best baby in the world – this is how babies in ‘regular’ families feel.

Things that are needed by carer:

- Playful
  - Kids can’t regulate positive affect.
  - Needs to be stretched into positive – find that hard.
  - When laughing the part of the brain that triggers shame is not functioning.
  - Laughing is a way of getting close and they are not aware of it.
- Accepting
  - I accept you as you are even if I judge behaviours.
  - Won’t accept behaviour but understand the motive.
  - Don’t use relationship as a discipline technique – don’t use withdrawal of self.
- Curiosity
  - Constant openness to teach the kid who they are.
  - Non-judgemental – so that the relationship can intensify and get more organised.
  - Every time we sort something out we reduce shame – he believes he is bad – give him another reason.
  - Make sense of the symptoms to reduce the shame. Understand the world with them – teach them why they do things.

- Empathy
  - Feeling with them.
  - If you feel it alone you don't feel. When you feel the baby's feeling with them you soothe them (as we do with our own babies).
  - Can only learn to self-soothe when you have been soothed by someone else.
  - Don't isolate a child if they can't self-soothe.
  - We treat anger differently to fear and sadness – treat it the same way.
  - If the child is withdrawn during anger they may calm down but often they will work it out with revenge.
  - Step by step soothing by a parent in the same rhythm as rocking. Eg when a child has sleep difficulties – soothe in same rhythm as rocking – only took 3 days for child to be sleeping properly with father sitting with him soothing him with a rocking soothing droning voice.
  - Problem solving (how can we work this out) comes after empathy.

Example:

A child was kicking the mother:

- Child says 'she doesn't like me'
- Response – 'I can now understand why you get so mad if you feel she doesn't like you'.
- Response – 'I now understand and can see why you feel so bad.'
- Motive for symptom/behaviour needs to be uncovered – shows empathy and shame is reduced.

#### **How to avoid retraumatizing children by bringing up past:**

- Fine line between not too pushy and not doing it.
- If children are safe with parents it is okay.
- Kid has control of process – 'am I talking about it too fast'. Child controls process – follow kids cues if too fast.
- Don't confront anything but address everything – Just act curious. Eg 'Why would a boy lie – let's think about it'.
- Need to understand it is not a moral issue – it is reality/shame issue.
- 'Can now see why you lied' (empathy) eg 7 practices a day at not lying (6 easy, 1 hard)
- Or Paradoxical way 'You must lie 3 times a day'.
- Helping children understand what they are communicating by their behaviour.
- Integrating incidents into their narrative..

#### **Parenting Hints:**

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- Safety
  - Everything has to facilitate attachment

- Get a 'Rhythm'
  - Need to learn how to get on with a parent before they can get on with peers.
- Success
    - These kids are terrible at learning from their mistakes.
    - They make the same mistake 85 times and still don't learn.
    - Go from failure to failure
    - No developmental resources – can't delay gratification.
    - Need to greatly reduce opportunity to fail.
    - Chance of success eg keep them out of playground while they are not getting on with peers.
    - Peer mentor.
- Structure
- And
- Supervision
    - Keep child close to someone he feels safe with so he doesn't fail all the time.
    - Greatly reduce choices (not a punishment)
    - Same way you deal with toddlers.
    - Interactive chores – do it with them like a 3 year old.
    - Need physical proximity to feel safe (might fuss but when get into your 'rhythm' they feel safe.
    - They choose negative interaction as a substitute.
    - When doing well for three months can be reduced very gradually, bit by bit.
    - Nonsense chatter – write thoughts down.
- Smiling
    - positive attitude
- Shame
- Stimulation
    - Control amount of stimulation
    - Not much activity as there is a muck up neurologically and child has to get back in 'rhythm'.
- Shouting
    - If there is fighting he feels not safe.
    - Use anger when you feel it but get rid of it.
    - Be firm and clear but it must not go on.

- Eg when he kicks the dog say 'I know you feel bad about kicking the dog. I am going to have to keep the dog safe as the dog is a member of the family also. Work out a plan for their separation, give a hug and it is over. Not to be angry all day.'

### Power Struggles

- Motivation of a power struggle is because their identity is formed around negative interactions.
- They will be successful when power struggles exist.
- Parents are not to fall for the bait.
- "You are not going to pick up the toys as I asked. I think you must need a hug as I can see you are feeling bad. Let's have a hug and then we'll pick up the toys together.'
- Reframe it as 'a bad day'. 'I can see you've had a bad day today – let's do it together.'
- When a power struggle is about to begin give them a candy bar as you can see they are feeling bad instead of a struggle, throw them off course!!!!'

### Other Principles

- General consequences or rewards not related to behaviour don't work.
- After they get a reward they will often be disruptive.
- They will not generalise the reward to learning about relationships. We want to teach about relationships.
- Want emotion so they can get 'engaged'.